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SCAG TO SEEK HISTORIC FORMAL INVOLVEMENT OF NATIVE AMERICAN TRIBES IN REGIONAL PLANNING EFFORTS

LOS ANGELES – The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) Regional Council approved the development of changes to the organization’s bylaws to seek formal participation of Southern California’s 17 Native American Tribes in regional planning and policymaking. The action taken by SCAG’s Regional Council represents a major milestone in efforts to enlist federally recognized Native American Tribes in the regional planning process. If the bylaws changes are ultimately enacted, SCAG would become the nation’s largest metropolitan planning organization to take the step of providing Tribal Governments with formal representation.

“Today’s action represents a historic step by SCAG to formalize the role of Tribal Governments in Southern California’s regional planning process,” said Temecula Mayor and SCAG Immediate Past President Ron Roberts. “I look forward to continuing the dialogue with the various Tribal Governments in our region and finalizing the manner in which they formally participate in SCAG later this year.”

In November 2002, SCAG adopted a Strategic Plan that included the goal of establishing a role for Tribal Governments in the regional planning process, including voting membership. Since 2003, SCAG has met with Tribal Government leaders and their representatives from the region’s 17 Tribal Governments through a series of summit meetings. The summits were designed to explain SCAG’s roles and responsibilities, encourage Tribal Governments to provide their input regarding the region’s transportation plan, and to identify how the Tribal Governments may participate in the regional planning process. In June 2005, SCAG established a Tribal Government Relations Task Force to facilitate negotiations regarding the formal participation of Tribal Governments in the SCAG planning process.

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“This is an historic development for Tribal Governments,” said Lynn Valbuena, chairwoman of the Tribal Alliance of Sovereign Indian Nations (TASIN). “We commend SCAG for its vision and recognition of Native American Tribes as capable and committed governments.”

The SCAG Regional Council action taken today included the following:

- Acknowledges the establishment of a new Tribal Government Regional Planning Board created by federally recognized tribes within the SCAG region for the purpose of selecting locally elected Tribal Government Council members to sit on SCAG’s committees.
- A locally elected member from the Tribal Government Regional Planning Board would be elected to serve on the SCAG Regional Council and Administration Committee as a full voting member.
- Two voting seats would be added to each of SCAG’s policy committees (Transportation and Communications; Community, Economic and Human Development; Energy and Environment) and made available for locally elected Tribal Council members.
- Tribal Council members would be permitted to participate as Advisory members to the SCAG General Assembly.
- Participating Tribal Council members would be subject to the same financial disclosure requirements currently applicable to Regional Council and policy committee members.

Currently, there are seventeen federally recognized Native American Tribes within the SCAG region. They include:

Fort Yuma Reservation (Quechan Tribal Council)
Chemehuevi Reservation
Fort Mojave Indian Tribe
San Manuel Band of Mission Indians
Twenty-Nine Palms Band of Mission Indians
Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians
Augustine Band of Mission Indians
Cabazon Band of Mission Indians

Cahuilla Band of Mission Indians
Colorado River Reservation
Morongo Band of Mission Indians
Pechanga Band of Luiseno Indians
Ramona Band of Mission Indians
Santa Rosa Band of Mission Indians
Soboba Band of Luiseno Indians
Torres-Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians
Death Valley Timbi-Sha Shoshone Band

With today’s action, SCAG’s Bylaws Committee will now be tasked with developing specific language to amend SCAG’s bylaws, which will be considered for approval by SCAG’s General Assembly in May 2006.